

UAS Mine Training Center New Center Responds to Needs of Southeast Mining Industry

"We have the jobs – we just don't have the qualified people to fill them." This is a common refrain in Alaska, and it's being heard more and more from many diverse industries across the state – including the growing mining industry in Southeast Alaska.

With several mines already in production, and others in the advanced exploration phase, the need for qualified workers is apparent. What isn't quite as clear is where these workers will come from.

"It mirrors the same thing that is going on in oil and gas industry. We're running out of people," says Dennis Steffy, director of UAA's Mining and Petroleum Training Services (MAPTS), which provides training, development and consulting services for organizations across Alaska. "Companies are going out of state to hire – just like with the pipeline. I have to see companies having to go Outside to meet their manpower needs when I know we can meet the needs here in Alaska."

With the opening of the new mine training center at UAS in Juneau, Steffy and others are hoping to train more Alaskans to fill the growing number of positions in the mining industry.

"The university is committed to providing on-demand, on-location, highest possible quality training for the mining industry," Steffy says. "We



▲ UAS chancellor John Pugh and Alaska Department of Labor commissioner Click Bishop cut the ribbon at the new mine training center at UAS in August 2007. (Photo by Sam Reves)

want to make Alaskans available for those jobs."

"It's part of our mission to help provide workforce development in high-demand job areas," adds Kristy Smith, administrative manager of UAS' School of Career Education.

"I hate to see companies having to go Outside to meet their manpower needs when I know we can meet the needs here in Alaska," says Dennis Steffy, director of UAA's Mining and Petroleum Training Services.

The mine training center, which began offering courses on October 15, is the result of a partnership between UAS, MAPTS, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and the mining industry in Southeast Alaska.

The idea for the center grew out of a series of meetings originally hosted by the Juneau Job Center to discuss the development of a training program

to meet the needs of the mining industry.

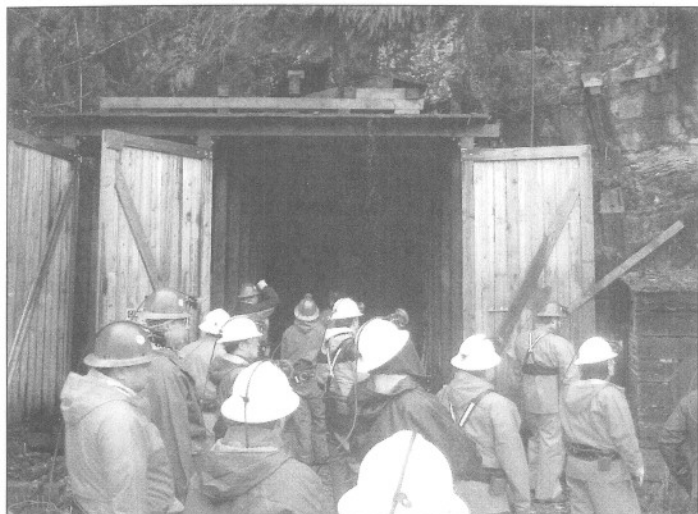
"During these meetings, it became apparent that both UAA/MAPTS and UAS were willing to come forth to offer better, short and efficient training that would lead to self-sufficient employment in the mining industry," says Mary Rodman-Lopez, community development specialist at the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Through further collaboration, contributions of facility space and faculty and staff support from the university, and grant funding provided through the U.S. Department of Labor and the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the training center opened this fall in the technical education center at UAS in Juneau.

Initially, the center will offer a five-week, entry-level mine training course, which includes entry-level mine labor training, Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), and entry-level underground miner classes. Future entry-level training courses will be offered based on industry need.

"The first five-week, entry-level mine training course at the new center is dedicated to training individuals to become entry-level miners. This industry, like many others, continues to grow but does not have the human resources to keep up with the growth. This training will allow a person to be a productive part of the mining crew beginning on the first day of employment," Rodman-Lopez says.

To meet the needs of those already working in the mining industry, the center also plans to provide the federally required MSHA and MSHA refresher courses, as well as other classes, such as welding, diesel fuel systems and safety training, which are needed for ongoing training and professional development.



▲ Students in the entry-level mine training class prepare to enter the Maggie Kathleen mine as part of the training offered through the new UAS mine training center. (Photo by Sam Reves)

"In addition to developing a workforce to meet the needs of current and future projects, there is also a need to help existing employees meet annual training requirements, as well as advance their careers," Smith says.

"The projects are in the area, the people are in the area, so it only makes sense to have the training in the area," says Dennis Steffy, director of UAA's Mining and Petroleum Training Services.

These ongoing training and professional development courses will be offered as needed by the mining industry.

"This is the kind of business where you don't know what you'll be teaching until the phone rings," Steffy says. "We're very responsive to industry needs."

The center's location in Juneau allows the university to respond quickly to industry requests.

"Having the facility in Juneau makes it easier," Steffy says.

"The projects are in the area, the people are in the area, so it only makes sense to have the training in the area."

The center is also convenient to an inactive mine called the Maggie Kathleen, which the university uses for hands-on training activities.

"This is an actual mine available to students, where they can gain experience they just

can't get standing on the surface," Steffy says.

While there are many interesting aspects of the new center, Steffy says the most remarkable is the partnerships that have made the facility possible.

"It's unique to have all the players come together for everybody's good. Everybody has jumped in and it's tremendously gratifying. You don't get to see this happen very often," he says. "The Department of Labor has been a great supporter, the mining companies have contributed a great deal, and UAS has been very understanding, supportive and professional. We're delighted to work with them on this."

For more information, contact:

- UAS/MAPT'S Mine Training Center, Kristy Smith, 907.796.6160, www.uas.alaska.edu/career_ed/Partnerships.html
- UAA Mining and Petroleum Training Services, 907.786.6413 (Anchorage) or 907.262.2788 (Soldotna), mapts@alaska.net, www.alaska.net/~mapts



University of Alaska Corporate Programs

University of Alaska Corporate Programs Statewide offers business and industry an opportunity for a dynamic partnership in the identification and delivery of strategically relevant learning solutions for each job family within their organizational system.

Partners:

Alaska Air
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Alaska Process Industry Careers Consortium (APICC)
Alyeska Pipeline Service Company
American Society for Quality (ASQ), Alaska Section
Boeing
BP Exploration Alaska
Municipality of Anchorage
Spenard Builders Supply, Inc.
University of Alaska
Weidner Investment Services, Inc.

Here's What They're Saying

"UA Corporate Programs offers the Municipality of Anchorage convenient solutions to government needs. It is an efficient and convenient gateway to university resources - subject matter experts, research and design, all framed in a statewide network that is unsurpassed." - David Otto, Employee Relations Director, Municipality of Anchorage

"APICC couldn't have gotten off the ground without a 'single point of entry' into the university. Corporate Programs can help business people navigate in the world of education." - Ann Sponholz, Former Executive Director, APICC

"It's like one-stop shopping for us. We can use Corporate Programs as a conduit to the resources within the rest of the university." - Dave Waldo, Training Specialist, State of Alaska DOT & PF